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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 002287

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [MDC](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER ON OBASANJO VISIT, POLITICAL
STALEMATE

REF: HARARE 2256

Classified By: Political Officer Win Dayton under Section 1.5(b)(d)

11. (C) Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai on November 21 confirmed to Ambassador Sullivan the essential details related by associates to the Embassy last week (reftel) of his meetings with Nigerian President Obasanjo on November 17.

He clarified that Obasanjo had said that Mugabe indicated agreement to meet Tsvangirai personally, but only at an unspecified time after consultation with his party. Stressing its potential importance, Tsvangirai suggested that a face-to-face meeting could have a psychological impact on Mugabe and his party, and noted the utility of having it done in the presence of a credible African leader, such as Obasanjo, to keep Mugabe honest. Even if Mugabe came to the meeting without good will, he thought it possible to get an agreement that the national crisis required the two sides to work together toward a solution, which could get the ball rolling. Addressing options for a transition, Tsvangirai emphasized his preference for a 6-12 month period under ZANU-PF rule, followed by internationally monitored elections. He was vague on a transition under shared authority, noting that "joint management" risked yielding "joint failure".

12. (C) Tsvangirai told Obasanjo that democratic space was actually shrinking in Zimbabwe and emphasized that none of the five conditions laid down by the Commonwealth had seen any progress. Confidence-building measures, such as re-opening The Daily News, would be important to build credibility. He confirmed that Obasanjo had been vague about CHOGM, not even mentioning it until Tsvangirai raised it first. Tsvangirai saw Obasanjo's objective for the trip as "due diligence" -- going the extra mile to justify whatever course he took on Zimbabwe's invitation trying to keep Zimbabwe from casting a shadow over his CHOGM. Tsvangirai attributed Mugabe's theatrics over CHOGM to possible "false assurances" from Namibian President Nujoma over his prospects of being invited. At the end of the day, Obasanjo told Tsvangirai that he would continue to press for a meeting to

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take place, following up with a letter to Mugabe shortly.

13. (C) COMMENT: Tsvangirai's emphasis on a face-to-face meeting with Mugabe reflects his conviction, shared by most here, that Mugabe's approval is the most significant sine qua non for talks to commence. He probably has few illusions that Mugabe would agree to a personal encounter, which, as Tsvangirai suggests, could put into motion events beyond his

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control. In any event, the government's media propaganda machine seems quite prepared to make political hay for the ruling party no matter what Obasanjo decides to do with Zimbabwe's CHOGM invitation.

SULLIVAN